PRESENTATION ON

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

THE LATIN SCHOOL
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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A Saturday on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Chestnut, the corner where I live, is - in the month of December, something to behold.

-more people and autos than the intersection can handle

-with Lord & Taylor, Marshall Fields, Bloomies, Bendels, buses lined up from Valparaiso, Kankakee and Waukegan...

-sidewalk Santas, Salvation Army brass quartets playing carols...

-sidewalk performers: one man with trombone whose entire repertoire is "Winter Wonderland," the mime who stands deadly still, the jazz drummer who sets up in front of the Hancock

-2 kids selling candy for a basketball team

-one scuffily dressed man asking for donations for the homeless

-Jews for Jesus handing out pamphlets

-a man dressed up like a lobster, advertising a seafood restaurant

-the anti-fur coalition, picketing at Water Tower and verbally assaulting startled shoppers

-2 mounted police..

What in the world is going on?... Obviously something very important to get the individual attention of these people...

(They are determined, heads into the wind, on an important mission)

700,000,000 on North Michigan Avenue - most in December -

and it began not at Thanksgiving, or even Halloween - but Lord and Taylor had wreaths up mid-October.

What, if anything, does it have to do with religion in _____ -

-specifically the birth of a little Jewis baby in a remote Palestinian village 2,000 years ago -

That it is more than commerce - our art testifies -

-probably no scene is painted with as much elegance and tenderness and powr as

the annunciation

Some of our most sublime music

J. S. Bach - Christmas Oratorio

Magnificat

Advent Chorales

G. F. Handel

Messiah

Benjamin Britten - Ceremony of Carols

Literature and Poetry -

part of my recent _____

two major works

British poet W.H. Auden

For the Time Being

What is going on?

Let's look at history for part of an answer.